

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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OXLEY: WASHINGTON COUNTY RIVERBOAT MONEY SAVED

INDIANAPOLIS – In the final hours of the 2005 session of the Indiana General Assembly, State Rep. Dennie Oxley (D-English) has played a key role in turning back efforts to take \$400,000 in riverboat money away from Washington County.

"By working with legislators from both parties in both chambers, I was able to convince my colleagues that this money should not be taken away from Washington County to balance the biennial state budget," Oxley said. "That funding has been promised to the people of Washington County, and it did not make any sense to take their support away to help finance a budget that will turn around and raise their property taxes."

Several weeks ago, that funding seemed at risk when Senate Republicans announced their intentions to use riverboat funding on a new state budget, and Gov. Mitch Daniels indicated he would not stand in their way. Since that time, numerous Washington County residents have expressed their concerns about the plan to Oxley, who has passed their words along to leaders in the House and Senate.

"The riverboat money has provided a source of revenue that has enabled Washington County to provide services and complete projects that have benefitted many area residents," Oxley said. "Without that assistance, officials will need to seriously consider other means to get funding, such as raising property taxes.

"It will be difficult for them to pursue that course, because the state budget will force property tax increases on local units of government," he added. "I am pleased to see that a majority of lawmakers felt it would be wrong to go back on a promise to those counties that benefit from riverboats, and take the local revenue away."

While delighted that the Republican plan failed, Oxley admitted he was worried that similar grabs could take place in future sessions.

"There will be a need to be constantly vigilant against efforts to take riverboat funds away from our area," Oxley said. "That money belongs to the people of Washington County, and as long as I am a member of the Indiana General Assembly, I will do everything in my power to protect their interests."

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